UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1980
18 September 1995

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General meets with senior advisers to review situation in former Yugoslavia; reiterates support for United States peace overture in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* United Nations and NATO extend suspension of air strikes against Bosnian Serbs for 72 hours, citing ongoing withdrawal of heavy weapons from Sarajevo exclusion zone.

* General Assembly concludes forty-ninth session by adopting resolution on assistance to Caribbean countries devastated by Hurricane Luis.

* Secretary-General says inter-Tajik talks have entered most complicated and decisive phase; calls on parties to comply strictly with cease-fire agreement.

* NGOs have crucial role to play in advancing process of democratization, Secretary-General tells forty-eighth annual DPI/NGO Conference.

* UNICEF Executive Board begins third regular session of 1995 at Headquarters.

* United Nations attempts to secure release of 21 aid workers trapped after Somali faction attacks city of Baidoa.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met with senior advisers at Headquarters on Saturday to reassess the situation in the former Yugoslavia and to receive a progress report on current developments. Among those present at the meeting were Special Representative Yasushi Akashi; the Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg; and the Deputy Commander of the United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF), Major-General Barry Ashton.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Secretary-General reiterated his support for the United States peace overture in Bosnia and Herzegovina and welcomed the important agreements it had already achieved. He reviewed the various options for international support for implementation of the peace agreement which now seemed to be in prospect. Relevant considerations were re-examined, paying special attention to the Organization's deepening financial crisis. The Secretary-General today sent a letter to the President of the Security Council regarding the outcome of the meeting.

* * *

The United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) last night extended the suspension of air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs for another 72 hours. UNPF Commander General Bernard Janvier and Admiral Leighton Smith of NATO said in a joint statement that the Serbs had shown a substantial start towards withdrawing their heavy weapons from the 20-kilometre exclusion zone around Sarajevo. The additional 72 hours would permit them to completely relocate their heavy weapons and would allow for a continuation of unimpeded road and air access to the city.

The way was now clear for the Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to meet with Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Government commanders to formalize the cessation of hostilities agreement within the Sarajevo exclusion zone, the statement continued. The group would also discuss the extension of a cessation of hostilities country-wide within the context of the overall momentum towards a peace agreement. Meanwhile, the Serbs must fully respect their commitments or the air strikes would resume.

A United Nations spokesman today reported that the Serbs had withdrawn 50 to 60 per cent of their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo. The situation in the city was stable, with only 73 firing incidents recorded in the past 24 hours. Fourteen flights landed at Sarajevo airport yesterday and nine more were planned for today. At the same time, United Nations vehicles were using roads into and out of the city without incident.

However, the spokesman expressed concern about the situation in western Bosnia, where the recent offensive by Bosnian Government and Croat forces had created a major refugee crisis. Up to 100,000 refugees were said to be fleeing the fighting and clogging the roads around Banja Luka. Last week, the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and NATO called on the parties to immediately cease all offensive military activities and hostile acts, emphasizing that there could be no military solution to the conflict.

* * *

The General Assembly today concluded its forty-ninth session by adopting a resolution on assistance to four Caribbean countries devastated by Hurricane Luis. The Assembly urged all States to contribute to relief and reconstruction efforts in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat and Saint

Kitts and Nevis. It also requested the Secretary-General to assist the Governments of those countries in identifying their needs and in mobilizing resources.

In his closing statement, General Assembly President Amara Essy (Cote d'Ivoire) said that due to its universal character, the Assembly was the most competent United Nations organ for dialogue and conflict prevention. It was a venue par excellence for solving regional problems and pursuing regional peace, a precondition for development worldwide. Therefore, the Organization should be given the financial and other resources it needed to maintain peace.

Summing up the achievements of the forty-ninth session, the President said the Assembly had adopted 328 resolutions and three instruments in the legal and political areas. It had created working groups to enhance the work of the United Nations in preparation for the next century and admitted Palau as the Organization's 185th Member State. It had also been addressed by some 45 heads of State and government.

* * *

The signing of the protocol on the principles for establishing peace in Tajikistan and the extension of the Tehran Cease-fire Agreement for six months are clear proof that the Tajik parties want to resolve their problems peacefully, according to the Secretary-General. However, in a report to the Security Council dated 16 September, he noted that breaches of the Agreement had continued. He called on the parties to comply strictly with their obligations, including the cessation of all acts of violence within Tajikistan and on the Afghan border.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali underlined the need to maintain momentum in the inter-Tajik talks. He had suggested that the parties next meet at United Nations premises in Vienna; the Tajik opposition had replied positively, and he hoped the Government would do likewise. The talks had entered their most complicated and decisive phase, and no time should be lost. He emphasized that the parties bore the primary responsibility for resolving their differences and ensuring their country's future.

In another development, a United Nations military observer was killed today amid fighting between two brigades of the Tajik Army. The unarmed observer -- an Austrian lieutenant-colonel -- was in a clearly marked United Nations vehicle at the time of his death. The Secretary-General expressed his condolences to the observer's family and to the Government of Austria.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today that non-governmental organizations were one of the strongest expressions of a vigorous global civil society. They had a crucial role to play in advancing the process of democratization and were themselves manifestations of that process, he told

the forty-eighth annual Department of Public Information (DPI) Conference for NGOs. The theme of the Conference is, "The United Nations at the turn of the century: global issues; global actors; global responsibility."

NGOs could mobilize public support for democracy and broaden debate and expand participation in discussion of critical issues, he continued. They could also help to build democratic institutions and practices within States and among States, and increasingly did so in cooperation with the United Nations. NGOs could monitor threats to democratic freedoms at home and throughout the world, while fully respecting national sovereignty. They made it possible for individuals and groups to mobilize for common purposes and common ideals, he concluded.

* * *

The Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today began its third regular session of 1995 at Headquarters. Board members will examine an updated health strategy for UNICEF, highlighting its achievements in health over the years, outlining new directions for achieving the goals set at the 1990 World Summit for Children, and calling for a new focus on women and teenagers.

During the one-week session, the Executive Board will also discuss progress following UNICEF's management review and its audit of the Kenya country office, budget proposals for the 1996-1997 biennium and follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development.

* * *

Twenty-one international aid workers have been trapped in Baidoa, Somalia, following an attack on the city by General Mohamed Farah Aideed's forces, a United Nations spokesman reported today. He said the workers -- 17 UNICEF staff members and four CARE staff members -- were in their offices and were not in any immediate danger. However, there had been widespread looting of humanitarian facilities in Baidoa, and the United Nations was taking measures to extricate them peacefully.

* *** *